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ABSTRACT

Because of widespread acceptance of Kohlberg's theory of moral development other aspects of moral thinking and behavior linked with the feminine voice have not received attention. Four areas of Kohlberg's theory relevant to the gender issue are critiqued, and work by Carol Gilligan, suggesting alternative theories for thinking and behavior, is analyzed, compared, and contrasted. Historically when developing curriculum, educators have emphasized modes of thinking which are linked with masculine ideals, in a manner compatible with Kohlberg's theory of moral development. However, applications of Gilligan's model of moral development need to be developed and applied. Specifically a model of moral development that encompasses a broader view and one that includes the feminine voice is needed. A model of decision making that could be used for curricular planning contains the following components: moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral decision making, and moral action. (APG)

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GENDER AND MORAL EDUCATION

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GENDER AND MORAL EDUCATION

Kathryn P. Scott

The past decade has produced a burgeoning of literature relevant to gender and moral education that has been largely ignored in mainstream educational theory and practice (Scott, 1985). New theories of human development derived from the female experience suggest that expressions of nurturance, relatedness, and responsibility for others need to be incorporated into the moral domain (Blum, 1980; Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Martin, 1986). Because of the widespread acceptance of Kohlberg's theory of moral development emphasizing justice reasoning, other aspects of moral thinking and moral behavior linked with the female voice have not received adequate attention.

In this paper I will (1) critique Kohlberg's theory of moral development in light of charges of gender bias, (2) analyze work by Carol Gilligan that suggests alternate theories for moral thinking and behavior, and (3) derive implications for moral education practice and research.

Gender bias and moral development

Lawrence Kohlberg and his associates have amassed an impressive body of research to document his theory of moral development (Colby, Kohlberg, Gibbs, & Lieberman, 1983). He has made considerable revisions and refinements to his original six stages. However critics continue to find his work flawed in many respects (Kohlberg, Levine, & Hewer, 1985). I will limit my critique to four areas relevant to gender issues: (1) sex differences in the measurement of stage development, (2) the

claim for universality of moral reasoning versus ethical relativity and context, (3) the incompleteness of justice reasoning to resolve moral dilemmas, and (4) the omission of moral action as a component of moral development.

First, it has been claimed by Gilligan (1977) that because Kohlberg used only males in his longitudinal studies to develop and validate his stages of moral reasoning, females may not perform the same or as well as males in stage progression. In particular they would be more likely to favor stage three, where concern for interpersonal relationships is stressed, while males will be more likely to favor stage four where concern for obedience to the law is stressed (Holstein, 1976). This criticism has received considerable attention but turns out to be a "tempest in a teapot." In numerous studies completed or analyzed since Gilligan's criticisms, sex differences in stage progression are either nonexistent or not meaningful because they are confounded with differences in education or occupation (Brabeck, 1983; Walker, 1984).

Of more substance is the claim that Kohlberg's theory is deficient because of his assertion that there is <u>universality</u> in defining and judging moral problems. His omitting female subjects in the tests of his theory leaves him open to this criticism. Kohlberg's presupposition that moral problems are best exemplified by framing them in the abstract is illustrated by his use of hypothetical dilemmas to measure moral reasoning. In the well-known hypothetical dilemma of Heinz, who must decide whether or not to steal a drug needed by his dying wife because

they are unable to afford to buy it, a typical response to this dilemma is provided by eleven-year-old Jake who constructs the situation as one where moral logic should be applied. Since the value of life supersedes the value of property, Jake thinks Heinz should steal the drug (Kohlberg, 1976).

In contrast, Gilligan (1982) cites the response of eleven-year-old Amy, who does not see the dilemma as a self-contained problem in moral logic. Rather she sees situation as a problem of relationships in which the druggist has failed to respond to Heinz' need and in which the wife would not want to risk losing her husband to jail. Amy comes up with a very different solution than permitted by Kohlberg's framing of the problem. If only Heinz would communicate with the druggist or others in a position to help, some acceptable resolution could be found. Based on this type of response to a moral dilemma, Gilligan proposes that the female voice frames moral problems in the <u>context</u> of a particular situation and seeks a resolution after careful consideration of the impact on others, rather than by a set of abstract, universal principles. Although Gilligan and her colleagues found that more females than males frame moral problems using relative versus absolute parameters, both orientations are used at times by both females and males (Lyons, 1983).

A third critique related to Kohlberg's claim for the universality of moral reasoning centers on his claim for <u>justice</u> as the ultimate measure of moral development. Kohlberg is unequivocal in his assertion that he and his predecessors (Piaget, 1932; Kant, 1949; Hare, 1963; Rawls, 1971) define the

moral domain as reasoning about problems where justice is the ultimate concern. In contrast, Gilligan and others find this definition of the moral domain incomplete and propose a second dimension, an ethic of care and responsibility, an orientation asociated with the feminine voice.

In their response to this criticism, Kolhberg and his associates agree "that the 'principle' of altruism, care, or responsible love has not been adequately represented in our work" (p. 20) and "partially accept Gilligan's differentiation of two orientations in moral judgement which may vary in stress from person to person and from situation to situation" (Kohlberg, Levine, & Hewer, 1985, p. 138). They point to examples of special relationships and obligations of care, such as among friends and family members, that presuppose but go beyond the general obligations of justice. They do not believe, however, that an ethic of care represents a separate structural development that can be measured in stages. Nor is it adequate "to resolve justice problems which require principles to resolve conflicting claims among persons, all of whom in some sense should be cared about" (Kohlberg, Levine, & Hewer, 1985, p. 21-22). Nonetheless Kohlberg's acknowledgement of his omission of the ethic of care lends support to Gilligan's critique even though Gilligan and he have different views of its definition and significance.

The last critique centers on the relationship between moral reasoning and moral action. Kohlberg's omission of moral action as a measure of stage development is a major concern because moral thinking is viewed as a process that occurs apart from

action and may or may not be correlated with specific behaviors of the individual. Kohlberg justifies this approach on the basis of correlational studies that indicate the higher the stage reasoning, the more consistent an individual's behavior will be with his or her moral reasoning on hypothetical dilemmas (Blasi, 1980; Kohlberg & Candee, 1983). Drawing from work by Blasi (1980) and Rest (1983), Kohlberg and Candee (1983) hypothesize that the link between moral judgment and moral action is the degree to which the individual believes she or he is responsible or accountable in the situation. Thus Kohlberg adds a new dimension to his theoretical framework, one that stresses judgment about one's responsibility to act.

Though not a gender issue per se, Kohlberg's enlargement of his theoretical framework parallels (and was preceded by) Gilligan's work and others who base their theories on the inclusion of the "feminine" voice which emphasizes the action component of moral development. Gilligan's (1977) interviewees struggled with moral dilemmas in a different way than most subjects have responded to Kohlberg's dilemmas because they were more likely to consider a variety of actions to be carried out, rather than limiting their response to the rightness or wrongness of one particular action as Kohlberg's scenerios demand. Kohlberg's suggestion that the individual's perception of his or her <u>responsibility to act</u> influences that individual's actions also parallels Gilligan's work in that she bases her ethic of care on the premise that responsibility for others is central to the moral domain.

An Ethic of Care

As a result of her interviews with adolescent females who were asked to describe their own life experiences and difficult choices they had made, Carol Gilligan and her associates have proposed a model of morality based on responsibility and care in which individuals are seen as connected in relationships with others (see Tables 1 and 2). In Kohlberg's view of human nature, individuals are seen as separate from each other and relationships viewed as reciprocal; objectivity and fairness are valued and mediated by rules that are carried out through individuals' duties and obligations to each other. In contrast Gilligan's subjects saw themselves as connected to others in relationships that are motivated by a concern to promote the welfare of others or to prevent their harm. The activity of care for others reflects a sensitivity to their needs and a willingness respond to others according to what would result in the best outcome for all involved.

Insert Tables 1 and 2 about Here

Whereas for Kohlberg moral problems are viewed as issues that can be settled by resolving competing claims through the application of impartial rules, principles, or standards, Gilligan argues that "the moral problem for females arises from conflicitng responsibilities rather that from competing rights... This conception of morality as concerned with the activity of care centers moral development around the understanding of responsibility and relationships" (1982, p. 19). In her theory

moral decisions are judged on how well they maintain or restore relationships and how effective they are in helping others or preventing hurt. Gilligan critiques the limitations of Kohlberg's ethics of principle at the expense of care in the following comparison:

> The blind willingness to sacrifice people to truth, however, has always been the danger of an ethics abstracted from life. This willingness links Gandhi to the biblical Abraham, who prepared to sacrifice the life of his son in order to demonstrate integrity and supremacy of his faith. Both men, in the limitations of their fatherhood, stand in implicit contrast to the woman who comes before Solomon and verifies her motherhood by relinquishing truth in order to save the life of her child. (1982, pp. 104-105).

Gilligan further hypothesizes that individuals progress through a sequence of perspectives with "each perspective representing a more complex understanding of the relationship between self and other and each transition involving a critical reinterpretaton of the conflict between selfishness and responsibility" (p. 105). As seen in Table 3, Gilligan (1977; 1982) has outlined three levels of development corresponding to Kohlberg's pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional levels. As the first level, concern is primarily with self, and decisions are made based on what is most expedient for self-preservation. At the first transition individuals consider the possibility of responsibility toward others as important as their own self-centered concerns. At the

second level moral judgment is based on shared norms and expectations. One's goodness and acceptance by others is of utmost concern. The conventional feminine virtures associated with service and deference to others predominate. Because individuals may consider themselves responsible for the actions of others while holding others responsible for the choices others make, individuals at this level are often caught between the activity of care and the passivity of dependence. During the second transition individuals reconsider the logic of self-sacrifice and begin to express concern again for their individual needs. At the third level of development individuals assert a moral equality between self and others; nonviolence or an injunction against hurting governs one's moral decisions. Responsibility now includes care for both self and others.

Insert Table 3 about Here

Gilligan's theory of morality is not suggested to replace Kohlberg's but to be a parallel one that reflects the moral thinking of both females and males, though males may have a less fully developed morality of care than females because of different social expectations (Lyons, 1983). Although additional research would be necessary to validate empirically her claims for developmental stages, Gilligan's views on morality add an important perspective to the content of Kohlberg's stages and suggest an alternate way of framing moral problems (Brabeck, 1983). This work also expands the moral domain from that of moral reasoning to include moral sensitivity and moral action as well.

Implications for Moral Education

Historically educators have emphasized modes of thinking that are linked with the masculine ideal: rational, analytic, and objective. Consequently Kohlberg's theory of moral development is compatible with past and current educational goals. Despite efforts of educators to increase equity in education, there remains considerable resistance to incorporating modes of thinking associated with the feminine ideal such as ones included in Gilligan's ethic of care: compassion, response to others, nurturance, and self-sacrifice. Jane Rowland Martin (1985; 1986) has written extensively on this point in describing philosophers' and educators' views on the "ideal" of the educated person, who is not expected to reflect what she coins the three C's of generative love: care, concern, and connection.

Curricular applications of Gilligan's model of moral development and related concerns need to be developed and applied. Nel Noddings (1984) has described how a caring person would function as an educator interacting with students. Work being done in prosocial education is relevant in this regard. For example, Pearl Oliner (1979) examined the content of social studies texts for prosocial concepts, generalizations, and examples, and found them wanting. She has recommended a number of strategies to expand the prosocial content of social studies curriculum (Oliner, 1983). Curriculum in the area of social development, such as Aware by Cooper and Elardo (1978), often addresses expressions of caring and concern for others. Findings from research suggest the the following techniques promote

prosocial behavior: empathy training, providing prosocial models, providing opportunities for prosocial actions, use of inductive reasoning, frequent assignment of pupil responsibilities and high maturity demands (Eisenberg, 1982; Solomon, Watson, Battistich, Schaps, Tuck, Solomon, Cooper & Ritchey, 1985).

For moral education specifically, we need to develop and apply a model of moral development that encompasses a broader view, one that includes the feminine voice. James Rest (1983) has proposed a model of comprehensive moral decision-making that could be used for curricular planning and as a research model to address the issues raised in this paper. His framework includes four components to account for the many variables that contribute to moral thinking and action, as follows:

(1) Moral sensitivity. Before moral thinking or action occurs, the individual usually recognizes that a situation exists in which moral action may be needed or that his or her actions may have consequences for others. This component is particularly necessary for Gilligan's orientation for an ethic of care and responsibility toward others and suggests the necessity for attributes such as compassion and empathy.

(2) Moral judgment. To think about what one ought to do, moral reasoning must occur. This component encompasses the bulk of the traditional work done on moral development and the emphasis of most moral education programs.

(3) Moral decision-making. Before taking action, individuals usually consider their alternatives and weigh the

pros and cons of each in light of their probable consequences for themselves and others. Making decisions for action in the context of specific situations is essential in Gilligan's model and includes potentially many more variables than considered by Kohlberg and his associates.

(4) Moral action. Finally moral action requires the will and skill to implement a decision. Factors, such as motivation, assertiveness, perseverence, self-discipline, and ego strength, can all influence the extent to which an individual implements a decision to act. What actions one takes and their influence on the individual and others is an essential measure of moral development.

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TABLE 1

Two Types of Relationships

Relationships of Reciprocity

The Separate/Objective Self		
Relationships are experienced in terms of	*mediated through*	*and grounded in*
RECIPROCITY between separate individuals, that is, as a concern for others considering them as one would like to be considered, with objectivity and in fairness;	**RULES** that maintain fairness and reciprocity in relationships;	**ROLES** which come from duties of obligation and commitment.

Relationships of Response

The Connected Self		
Relationships are experienced as	*mediated through*	*and grounded in*
RESPONSE to OTHERS in THEIR TERMS that is, as a concern for the good of others or for the alleviation of their burdens, hurt, or suffering (physical or psychological);	**THE ACTIVITY OF CARE** which maintains and sustains caring and connection in relationships;	**INTERDEPENDENCE** which comes from recognition of the interconnectedness of people.

From N. Lyons, Two perspectives: On self, relationships, and morality. Harvard Educational Review, 53, 1983, p. 134.

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TABLE 1

COMPARISON OF GILLIGAN'S MORALITY OF CARE AND RESPONSIBILITY
AND
KOHLBERG'S MORALITY OF JUSTICE*

	Morality of care and responsibility Gilligan	Morality of justice Kohlberg
Primary Moral Imperative	Care/Responsibility	Justice
Components of Morality	Relationships	Sanctity of individual
	Responsibility for self and others	Rights of self and others
	Care	Fairness
	Harmony	Reciprocity
	Compassion	Respect
	Selfishness/self-sacrifice	Rules/legalities
Nature of Moral Dilemmas	Threats to harmony and relations	Conflicting rights
Determinants of Moral Obligation	Relationships	Principles
Cognitive Processes for Resolving Dilemmas	Inductive thinking	Formal logical-deductive thinking
View of Self as Moral Agent	Connected, attached	Separate individual
Role of Affect	Motivates care, compassion	Not a component
Philosophical Orientation	Phenomenological (contextual relativism)	Rational (universal principle of justice)
Stages	I. Individual Survival	I. Punishment and Obedience
	IA. From Selfishness to Responsibility	II. Instrumental Exchange
	II. Self Sacrifice and Social Conformity	III. Interpersonal Conformity
	IIA. From Goodness to Truth	IV. Social System and Conscience Maintenence
	III. Morality of Nonviolence	V. Prior Rights and Social Contact
		VI. Universal Ethical Principles

* Adopted from Mary Brabeck (1983). Moral Judgement: Theory and Research of differences between males and females. Developmental Review, 3, p. 278.

TABLE 3

CAROL GILLIGAN'S ETHIC OF CARE

Levels of development

PRE-CONVENTIONAL	Level 1: Orientation to individual survival Self is sole object of concern. Constrained by a lack of power. "One does what one has to do."
	First Transition: From selfishness to responsibility Possibility for doing the "right thing" considered. Self-definition includes connections with others.
CONVENTIONAL	Level 2: Goodness as self-sacrifice Shared norms and consensual judgment. Acceptance by others valued and need for approval. Worth proclaimed on basis of ability to care for and protect others.
	Second Transition: From goodness to truth Concern for intentions and consequences of actions as well as not hurting others.
POST-CONVENTIONAL	Level 3: Morality of nonviolence. Assert moral equality between self and others. Care a universal obligation. Willingness to express and take responsibility for choice.

Adapted from Carol Gilligan (1977). In a different voice: Women's conception of the self and morality. Harvard Educational Review, 47, p. 492-509.